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# The Classical Weekly

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## A PHYSICIAN'S TRIBUTE TO THE CLASSICS

On April 25, 1922, the Medical Society of the State of North Carolina met at Winston-Salem. The President, Dr. Hubert A. Royster, of Raleigh, delivered an address on *The Real Things in Medicine*. The address was published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, on August 5 (79:424-428). Some extracts from it will be of interest and of value, directly and indirectly both, to students and teachers of the Classics.

Brains are the alpha and omega of the man of medicine. . . . The study of medicine bestows no more brains and adds not one cubit to the mental stature. It provides only a few more implements of the mind to be used for good or for ill. Unless the roots are deeply planted in the soil of real learning, the study of any science narrowly pursued takes away from the natural resources of the mind more than it puts in. In other words, a finely endowed intellect is needed to carry on in the realm of science, to withstand its temptations toward the illogical, to keep clear headed in the midst of fact and fancy. . . .

Make no mistake about culture. Culture is refinement, accuracy, poise, resourcefulness; it is not effeminacy, weakness, conventionalism, impracticability. We have been getting too far away from the humanities, from classical education, from academic scholarship, if you please. In the quest of science—and there is no nobler pursuit—we have set up utilitarian courses, called premedical and certainly premeditated, for the purpose of reducing to a minimum all those things which do not bear directly on the matter in hand, and swelling to a maximum those that are concerned in the material things of medicine. In this we have left out the very bed rocks of learning: the capacity to interpret the phenomena and the power to express the findings. If the average trained laboratory worker in our country today has any weakness, it is his inability to convey his ideas, to put down what he has done, to express his results in terms clear and terse. Generally his work surpasses his words. And it is not the misfortune of the individual, but of the plan which essays to substitute scientific research for sound scholarship; to get the one without the other, when we may have both. It is the common failing of the later generation of medical men that they do not write so lucidly or think so accurately as those just before them. There are, of course, numerous and notable exceptions. But the observation is probably correct, and its explanation lies in the small stress placed on actual scholarship required of one entering the profession of medicine.

We are living in an age of inaccuracy. We are inaccurate in thought, in speech, in spelling, in writing. We know a great deal; but do we know anything very well? Short cuts and practical preparation are the order of the day. Language, the only medium through which thoughts are given out, has been almost forgotten. Will it be considered very old fashioned if I should suggest that the neglect of the languages, and particularly the banishment of Greek, may be responsible for our loose thinking and our lack of scholarship? The value of Greek for the medical student

might be a theme for a discourse in itself. If you should go over the evidence, you would be surprised to find how much medicine owes to the Greek language, what a very large number of our words referring to diseases, operations and organs are derived from the Greek—fully as many as from Latin. And many of those coming through the Latin were taken originally from Greek. "We suspect, too, that our men of science who are supposed to be opposed to 'so much Greek' must study that language secretly or they assuredly could not name the tools of their own trade". The chief advantage of the study of Greek is a training in accuracy, in the expression of nice shades of meaning, the very essence of a cultivated mind engaged in scientific thought. We cannot divorce science and culture; we cannot go on rearing a race of seekers after truth who are not trained thinkers; we cannot fail to perceive that the education of a candidate for a learned profession means for us, as it has meant for all the older nations, a thorough grounding in the ancient and honorable arts and classics before we approach the special study needed for our dignified calling. That way trod our great fathers, who outstripped us with the means at their disposal; that way lies our hope of elevation, of bringing back the well rounded medical man and adding to him the marvellous scientific attainments of the present age. My thought was expressed by Thomas L. Stedman, in these words: "Some day the pendulum will swing the other way and a new renaissance will once more join culture to knowledge to make the perfect physician".

Utterances like those of Dr. Royster, especially with respect to the inability of scientific men to express themselves in English, have appeared from time to time in *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY*. Witness vigorous remarks by Dr. W. H. D. Rouse, in an article entitled *Learning English through the Classics*, 6.17-18, 25-26, by Mr. Paul Elmer More, and more especially by Mr. T. A. Rickard, of the Royal School of Mines, London, Editor of a United States technical journal, in 9.97, 8.89. Pertinent too is the article by Professor Trotter, of Swarthmore College, on *The Terminology of Anatomy*, 11.131-134.

C. K.

## A CHEMICAL INTERPRETATION OF LIVY 21. 37. 2<sup>1</sup>

Pittsburgh is the laboratory as well as the workshop of the world, and the odor of chemicals penetrates even into the Latin class-room. We have in the University of Pittsburgh the Mellon Institute of Industrial Research, designed to bind together science and industry. To-day it goes one step further, and links together science and the Classics, for the technical

<sup>1</sup>This paper was read at the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Classical Association of the Atlantic States, at the University of Pittsburgh, April 29, 1922.